Machiavelli's Control and Manipulation
By. Joshua D. Glawson

The Italian political philosopher and writer Niccolo Machiavelli wrote adamantly about achieving goals, especially when it came to achieving the goal of becoming a political leader as specified throughout his work in *The Prince* and his *Discourses on Livy*. However, with his somewhat political science approach to political philosophy, Machiavelli advocated for control and manipulation, among other deceptive methods, in order for one to accomplish their goal of becoming a "sovereign power." In fact, he specified while reflecting on the work of Camillus that "Government consists in nothing else but so controlling subjects that they shall neither be able to, nor have cause to, do you [government, or sovereign] harm," (Discourses, ii.23.1-3).

Some may claim that Machiavelli did not meant 'control,' or 'manipulation' in general, to mean the same thing as suggested above. These same people will say that he was merely advising the best way for a politician or sovereign to become the best leader they can be while adhering to his set of principles and political philosophy. Yet, contrary to these Machiavellian advocates, Machiavelli himself suggested that mimicking virtues allows one to accomplish their ends, and the manipulation as the means justified those ends of accomplishing the position of sovereign power. Machiavelli advocated for any means necessary, since the ends justified the means while he held 'fear' to be greater than 'love' when it comes to becoming and being a sovereign power. In the Discourses, Machiavelli states, "For although the act condemns the doer, the end may justify him," (Discourses, i.9.).

"Men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, because it belongs to everybody to see you, to few to come in touch with you. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, which it is not prudent to challenge, one judges by the result. For that reason, let a prince have the credit of conquering and holding his state, the means will always be considered honest, and he will be praised by everybody because the vulgar are always taken by what a thing seems to be and by what comes of it; and in the world there are only the vulgar, for the few find a place there only when the many have no ground to rest on," (Prince, XVIII).

Through his advocating of manipulation and impropriety, Machiavelli found no qualms with one merely *appearing* to be virtuous, much like an actor plays a role, in that "It's seeming to be virtuous that helps, as, for example, seeming to be compassionate, loyal, humane, honest, and religious," (Prince, 18.5). This was his way of attempting to "legitimately" create a sovereign out of actual illegitimate means. That is to say, a contract can be voided when either side of the agreement has made false claims as to who they are, especially as it pertains to establishing a new sovereign power. If someone goes to a new land in order to establish a government or State, and they have done so based on a façade including manipulation in order to control, it would be absolutely *right* for people to resist the person(s) who is attempting to control them, as it is blatantly obvious that the manipulator is not who they have claimed to be. The cunning politician's lack of

integrity raises the question of whether their goals for leading the people are legitimate or trustworthy at all.

It should also be noted that the word 'Machiavellianism' in political science means "the view that politics is amoral and that any means, however unscrupulous, can justifiably be used in achieving political power;" and in psychology it is "the name of one of the 'dark triad' personalities, characterized by a duplicitous interpersonal style, a cynical disregard for morality, a lack of empathy, and a focus on self-interest and personal gain," as it describes "a person's tendency to be unemotional, and therefore able to detach themselves from conventional morality and hence to deceive and manipulate others." Interestingly enough, the other two personalities in the 'dark triad' other than 'Machiavellianism,' are 'narcissism' and 'psychopathy.'